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# Dennis the Menace

No. 45

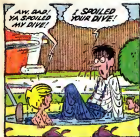
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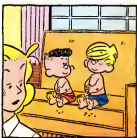
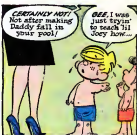
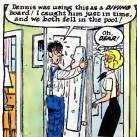


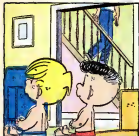


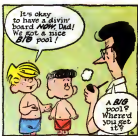
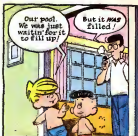
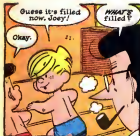




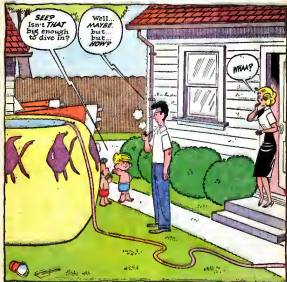












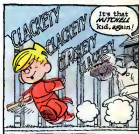


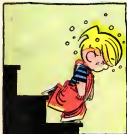
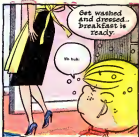


# DENNIS BEFORE DAWN









# THE RED BEETLE

**B**ILLY MORRISON leaned forward in the rear seat of the little foreign car, trying to see through the windshield where the wipers were barely able to clear the pelting rain. He knew his father was watching the road, with its water-filled holes and slippery mud, but he wanted to help somehow, too.

Then his mother's head came back, her face white, teeth clenched in pain. Desperately, Billy hoped that the little car would get them to the hospital in time—the little car that his mother never liked, and was now her only hope.

The stubby car plowed through the storm like a determined little red beetle. And what was what Billy had named it the day his Dad brought it home—the Red Beetle.

His mother had looked at it in dismay. "You mean you traded our nice, big car for this—this little thing?"

"It's little," his father chuckled, "but it's well built, and it'll take us anywhere we want to go, on about half the gas we've been using!"

"Yeah?" Billy said excitedly. "I've been reading all about these little guys! We can get almost 40 miles to the gallon, Mom."

"Well—that sounds all right," she said doubtfully. She walked around to the rear of the little red car. "But what about when I go shopping? That trunk looks pretty small."

Billy laughed at his mother's amazement when his Dad raised the "trunk" lid and she saw the compact little engine. "The trunk's up front, Mom," he told her. "And the back seat folds down so you'll have lots of room for groceries."

"Jump in—take us for a little ride, Jane," his father said proudly. But his smile disappeared as Mrs. Morrison tried to get the car going. She was used to an automatic shift, and she stalled the car several times trying to work the clutch and hand shift. When she finally got it going down the road, she was tense and nervous.

"I feel like I'm in a baby carriage," she protested.

"You'll get used to it." Billy's Dad assured her. "See what good visibility you have down over that hood? Feel how well she rides? Why, wa'n't as snug as bugs in a rug!"

"That's an idea, Dad!" Billy laughed. "We'll call her the Red Beetle!"

His mother shuddered. "Don't say that, Billy! You know how I hate bugs. And I don't think I'll ever get to like this car as well as our old one!"

And, try as she did, she was never really happy in the stubby little car. She liked the "feel" of their big, heavy car better, although Billy and his Dad tried to point out that the Red Beetle rode just as well, was much easier to park, used less gas.

Even this morning, when she was stricken with terrible stomach pains, and they hurried her into the car, she found something wrong with it. The windows were up tight to keep out the driving down-pour, and she couldn't close the door.

"That's because this car's airtight, Mom," Billy said. "You've got to open a window a little so you can slam the door."

"Forget the car, Billy!" his father snapped, white faced. He ran down the win-







dow, reached over, and closed the door. "The thing is to get to the hospital through this storm before your mother gets worse!"

Billy fell silent. The doctor had said on the telephone it might be appendicitis—to get her right to the hospital, across the river in town.

Then red lights flashed ahead of them and they came to a halt beside a State Trooper's car. Dripping, the officer stuck his head in the window. "You'll have to turn back, folks. The bridge is washed out."

"Turn back?" Mr. Morrison gasped. "But we can't—I have to get my wife to the hospital. The doctor thinks it's appendicitis!"

"But the bridge is gone!" the officer repeated. "Take a look. You'll just have to go up river to the hospital at Watsonville."

Just then Billy's mother gasped in pain. "That's sixty miles!" his Dad exclaimed. "We'd never make it in time! Isn't there any way to get across the river?"

"No boats—nothing!" the Trooper said grimly. "Get in my car—we can make it in less than an hour!"

But Billy's Mom groaned, and they knew it would be too late.

Then Billy had an idea! "Hey, Dad! I remember something I read about this car! It's..."

"Will you forget the car?" his father almost shouted. "It's your mother I'm thinking of!"

"Me, too, Dad!" Billy said earnestly. And as he went on, his father's eyes widened with hope.

When the Red Beetle, covered with mud, rolled into the Emergency gate of the hospital, the white-coated attendants stared. "Why, Mr. Morrison! How did you get across the river? The bridge..."

"Never mind that!" Billy's Dad snapped. "Take care of my wife!"

Half an hour later, Billy and his Dad jumped up from their seats in the waiting room as their doctor entered. He was smiling reassuringly.

"We have ice packs on her and she's much better," he reported. "I don't think we'll have to operate, but it's a lucky thing you got her here in time. Now, tell me—how did you get across the river?"

His Dad patted Billy on the shoulder. "You tell him, son—you thought of it!"

"We floated across!" Billy said excitedly.

Puzzled, the doctor asked: "You mean you found a boat? But I thought..."

"No, there weren't any boats," Billy told him. "So we floated across in our car!"

The doctor stared out the window at the stubby little car standing in the rain, as Billy went on:

"Our car's airtight—you can't slam a door unless a window's open. And I read somewhere that it's so airtight that it'll float! So we drove right into the river and floated down to that point below here!"

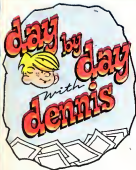
The doctor shook his head. "I'll be darned! Well, I have to get back to my patients." He started to walk away, then turned.

"Oh, yes—something Mrs. Morrison asked me to tell you both." And Billy and his Dad grinned at each other as the doctor said:

"She wants you to give the Red Beetle a pat on the nose for her—whatever that means."

THE END

**Monday**



"Well, they call **BOB** the class that I can't miss!"

**Thursday**



"Oh, I bought **BOB** the last time we had a month's supply!"

**Friday**



"The whole 'em have **BOB** the **FRIDAY** dog!"

Tuesday



"I SAID A STRONG ONE! BUT MY MOM FORGOT IT ON!"

Wednesday



"LOOK AT THAT! TO WANT TO BE THE BOY!"

Saturday



"MY CAPTIVE ARE OLD FRIENDS. SHE'S  
BUILT A MOTHER."

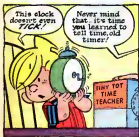
Sunday



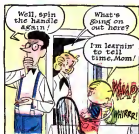
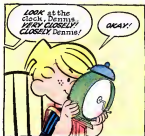
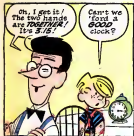
"IS THERE ANY TO CATCH A FALLIN' STAR?"

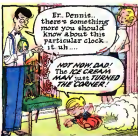
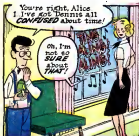
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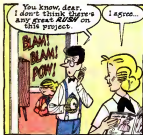
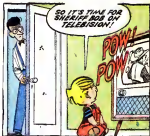
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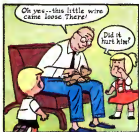


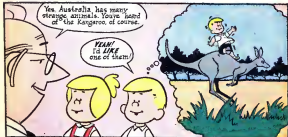


END



# A GRAMPA STORY







*IT HAS A BILL LIKE A DUCK....*



*... BUT FUR LIKE A BEAVER....*



*...CLAWS LIKE A DOG, BUT WEBBED FEET....*



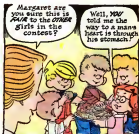
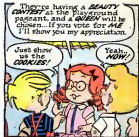
*...IT'S NOT A BIRD, BUT IT LAYS EGGS....*

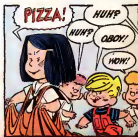


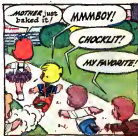


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